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What to expect when you're electing

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Just a day before the Winthrop's first homecoming concert, an email November 8 marks the day when people from around the United States will go to the polls to cast their ballot for the upcoming election. For many of Winthrop's students, this will be the first time that what they have to say about the presidency and other offices will count.

Jessica Perkins, 18, has high hopes for her first voting experience.

"I like it. I'm excited. This is a crucial election, so I'm glad that I can vote in this one especially," Perkins said.

For many first-time voters, however, they do not know what to expect on the ballot.

According to Sydney Soldner, 18, she did not know what to expect when voting absentee.

"I was surprised about how many other parties there were and so many other things to vote for besides president," she said.

Voting for the first time can be intimidating if one does not know what they are walking into. When first walking into a polling station, the voter will most likely stand in a line waiting to receive a yellow card. The card is then inserted into the machine in order to cast the vote electronically.

On the ballot there will be many types of offices and parties within those offices. Choices for the major parties for President, Senate and the House of Representatives. In each district, however, there will be smaller offices that will vary between locations.

These smaller offices could include state legislative races and local races, such as choices of school board officials as well as different district officials, such as sheriff.

Within each office, no matter if they are a major office or in the district, there will be different parties present. The major parties, Democrat and Republican, will be evident throughout the ballot. The only additional party that will be available will be the Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson, who is listed under the choice for president.

There will also be a "write-in" option, which simply allows the voter to write down a possible candidate that was not on the list. You will also see "incumbent" written next to certain names in the offices. The word simply states that the individual is currently in office.

Soldner also acknowledged an aspect of the ballot that many first-time voters will not expect: ballot initiatives.

According to Dr. Adolphus Belk Jr., Winthrop professor of political science and African-American studies, "The ballot initiatives put public policy questions before voters." Belk stated, "In years past, voters have been asked everything from criminal justice reforms like truth in sentencing or 'three-strikes and you're out' to the use of race as a criteria in university admissions and employment at public institutions and in public jobs."

Ballot initiatives will differ between states, but it is important to know some of the current issues in the government today.

At the end of voting, you will take your yellow card back to the desk and leave the polling place. Your vote is now being counted, your voice is now being heard.

The naked truth about sugar consumption

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It is a cool October afternoon at Winthrop, leaves are falling and the stress of the mid semester is draining students energy. A student running late to class may opt to grab a Naked Smoothie or Starbucks Pumpkin Spice Latte instead of lunch. However, what many students don't know is the adverse health effects these snacks may be having on them.

The American Heart Association recommends 6 to 9 teaspoons of sugar daily, but your average grande (medium) Pumpkin Spice Latte from Starbucks has around 12.5 teaspoons of sugar in it. This means that a student grabbing a coffee before their 8 a.m. will already be over on their daily recommended sugar before they have had a single meal. Say this student needs to work on her CRTW paper and decides to skip lunch and instead have a "healthy" Naked Smoothie. If they pick up a Naked Pomegranate Blueberry, they are consuming 61 grams or 15.25 teaspoons of sugar in one meal. To which this student may think, "it is made from fruit, it says no added sugar. It has to be healthy!" While this is somewhat true, it does not mean that smoothies such as these are healthy.

Fruit Sugar

Fruit naturally contains sugar, hence their sweet taste, however this sugar is not unhealthy for you because fruit also contains high amounts of fiber. So while a strawberry may contain 0.6 grams of sugar it also contains 0.2 grams of fiber. Fiber is vital for the body's ability to process and utilize sugar. Fiber slows the body's absorption of sugar, meaning the pancreas and liver, the organs which process sugar in the human body, aren't overloading.

This sugar is then able to be used as an energy source instead of being converted into fat around the organs. When fruit is cooked down to make juice or Naked Smoothies the fiber is cooked out. The health benefits from the fruit are lost and the products left over are toxic, empty sugar calories.

The Problem

Sugar is a toxic and addictive substance. The big concern surrounding the sugar addiction in America is a lack of public knowledge. Ever notice that there is no sugar daily value on nutrition labels? That is because, according to Robert Laust, 80% of foods on the American grocery market are tainted with unnecessary added sugar. This is an issue for many people, especially those who cannot afford fresh fruit and vegetables and people trying to achieve a healthy lifestyle but lack the education they need. For example, a student who may wanted to lose a little weight after their freshman year may choose a "low fat" option from the grocery store. However, low fat options are often chock full of added sugar meaning the student will only continue to gain or will remain at their current weight.

Lack of transparency is an issue for all food consumers. If a person chooses to eat a cupcake or drink a coke, they actively understand that what they are consuming is unhealthy. However, if someone wants to purchase healthy foods, at our present state they lack the resources to do so.

Sugar poses several health risks to humans. Sugar is a leading cause for Type 2 diabetes, in fact, according to a study done in Europe, as communicated by Robert Laust during his 2013 Ted Talk, if a person consumes one can of soda daily their risk for diabetes goes up 29 percent. This statistic, accord to Laust, is irrespective of all other dietary habits. Sugar causes fat build up around organs, which leads to heart, liver, and kidney diseases as well as increased risks for certain cancers and even Alzheimer's.

Politics

There has been increasing legislation surrounding sugar, both in schools and in regards to public sale.

This June Philadelphia passed a legislation increasing tax rates for soda and other sugary beverages in an effort to curb public consumption of the potentially harmful drinks. Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump spoke out on Twitter stating "Crooked Hillary Clinton has endorsed Philly's soda tax," he posted, "which violates her pledge to not support taxes on the poor and middle class." The GOP has also raised concerns, similar to their protests to Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" campaign, about the government's right and ability to "dictate personal choice."

Former presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders also opposed the legislation over concerns that it would hit lower income level citizens the hardest. "Making sure that every family has high-quality, affordable preschool and child care is a vision that I strongly share," Senator Sanders said, according to the New York Times. "On the other hand, I do not support paying for this proposal through a regressive tax on soda that will significantly increase taxes on low-income and middle-class Americans. At a time of massive income and wealth inequality, it should be the people on top who see an increase in their taxes, not low-income and working people."

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Democratic presidential nominee Secretary of State Hillary Clinton endorsed the tax plan, stating, "it starts early with working with families, working with kids, building up community resources," Secretary Clinton said, according to a CNN report. "I'm very supportive of the mayor's proposal to tax soda to get universal preschool for kids. I mean, we need universal preschool. And if that's a way to do it, that's how we should do it." She said this in regards to a proposal to use the revenue from the increased tax to fund universal prekindergarten.

What can you do?

In order to be proactive about sugar consumption, students can start by reading the labels.

Look for foods low in sugar and calculate how much of the substance is in your favorite snacks and drinks. Students may also vote for candidates which support or opposed sugar referendums, in order to let the government know how they feel about the state of the food market in our country.

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